



CHINA by Kanqing Wang

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Overview

With the booming economy of the past several decades, Chinese education has experienced a rapid development as well. Amid an increasingly open business climate and a significant shift towards a services and skills-based economy, the country's education system has become a high priority for the government. Education policy became one of the most discussed topics during the National People's Congress (NPC) and Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference annual sessions, which led to educational laws and policies being reformed progressively. However, problems and challenges cannot be ignored: especially in the system of elementary and secondary schooling, educational quality and equity problems, finance and funding issues, and corruption persists. In order to improve the overall situation of Chinese education, the Ministry of Education recently issued a medium to long-term reform and development plan for education to support its sustainable development in the years ahead. Therefore, the government will continue to focus on addressing the issues of education in rural and remote areas, freedom of elementary school choice, and migrant children's schooling in the next decade.

The structure of schooling

Administration and management of the education system

The responsibility for educational administration is on departments of education in the governments at the central, provincial, prefecture, municipal, and county levels. According to *the Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, the State Council and local people's governments at all levels shall guide and administer education according to the principles of management at different levels and with a suitable division of responsibilities.

The administrative educational departments under the State Council are in charge of educational work throughout the country, and undertake overall planning, coordination, and management of educational activities. The administrative departments of education under the governments at or above the county level are in charge of educational activities in their respective administrative regions. Other administrative departments of government, at or above the county level, are responsible for the relevant educational activities within their jurisdiction. Other ministries and commissions under the State Council also have departments in charge of educational administration within their sphere of competence.

The Ministry of Education is the supreme education administrative body in the country, with numerous branches at provincial and local levels. Though the Ministry, fiscal allocations are made on a region-by-region basis and account for the majority of educational funding. However, local government plays a key role in compulsory education, and educational decision-making has become much more decentralized.

Primary education

Primary education requires five or six years to complete. Each school year consists of two semesters, comprising 38 academic weeks and 13 holiday weeks. According to the *Curriculum Plan for Primary and Junior Secondary School under Compulsory education (pilot)* issued in 1993, the state arranges nine primary school subjects: Chinese Language, Mathematics, Moral Education, Physical Education, Social Studies, Natural Science, Music, Arts, and Labor Services. Schools with adequate resources also teach foreign languages. Other subjects may be arranged by the local education department.

Secondary education

Junior secondary education offers a three or four-year course of study. The stage

arranges 13 subjects for junior secondary schools: Chinese Language, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Politics, History, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Education, Music, Art, and Household Skills.

China implements a nine-year compulsory education program, comprising primary education and junior secondary curriculum: a 5-4 system (five years of primary school and four years of junior secondary school) or 6-3 system (six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school) is offered depending on the individual city and county. After finishing nine years of compulsory education, students who wish to continue their studies have the option either to attend a regular senior secondary school or enter a vocational secondary school. A student's track is determined by a locally administered entrance exam during the last month of junior secondary school.

Regular senior secondary schools usually comprise three years of education.

Major curriculum topics include Chinese Language, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Information Technology. Graduates from senior secondary school education have options either go to two- or three- year colleges or regular four-year universities after successfully completing a nation-wide college entrance examination.

The legal framework

The highest level and the principal law is the educational content of the Constitution. *The Constitution of People's Republic of China* defines the social character, principles and general objects, structure and composition, schooling system, administration and management system of education. It stipulates the educational rights and responsibilities of Chinese citizens, educational assistance for minorities, women, and people with disabilities, as well as protections for minors. The Constitution also stipulates the terms of schooling and the relationship between religion and education. All of these are the highest basis and foundation of educational legislation, and any form of educational law and policy cannot contradict the Constitution.

Article 24 of the Constitution, promulgated in 1982 (and amended in 1988, 1993, 1999, and 2004), stipulates that the State strengthens the building of socialist spiritual civilization by promoting education in high ideals, ethics, general knowledge, discipline and legality, and by promoting the formulation and observance of rules of conduct and common pledges by various sectors of the population in urban and rural areas. The State advocates the civic virtues of love for the motherland, for the people, for labor, for science, and for socialism. It conducts education in

patriotism and collectivism, in internationalism and communism, and in dialectical and historical materialism, to combat capitalist, feudalist and other decadent ideas.

The second level of the legal framework is *The Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, which was adopted by the Third Session of the Eighth National People's Congress on 18 March 1995 and came into force on 1 September of the same year. According to this law, education in China shall serve the construction of socialist modernization, be combined with production and labor, and with all round development of morality, intelligence, and physique for the socialist cause. The State shall conduct education for promoting among learners patriotism, collectivism, and socialism as well as ideals, ethics, discipline, legality, national defense, and ethnic unity. Education shall be carried out in the spirit of inheriting and expanding the fine historical and cultural traditions of the Chinese nation and assimilating all the fine achievements of the civilization progress of human beings.

Article 3 specifies that in developing the socialist educational undertakings, the State shall uphold Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the theories of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics as directives, and comply with the basic principles of the Constitution.

The Education Law guarantees the strategic position of education in social and economic development, implements the significant decision of the State in establishing educational development as a priority, and guarantees the reform and development of education.

Article 9 stipulates that the citizens shall have the right and duty to be educated and enjoy equal educational opportunities of education regardless of ethnic community, race, sex, occupation, social conditions or religious belief. According to article 12, the Chinese language, both oral and written, shall be the basic oral and written language used in schools and other educational institutions. Schools or other educational institutions that enroll mainly students from ethnic minority groups may use the language of the respective ethnic community or the native language commonly adopted in that region. Schools and other educational institutions shall popularize the nationally common spoken Chinese and the standard written characters.

The third level of the educational legal framework is the special law and regulations that can be used to support the Education Law. They are:

The Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, adopted at the Fourth session of the Sixth National People's Congress on 12 April 1986 and amended at the Tenth National People's Congress on 29 June 2006, stipulates that the State adopts a nine-year compulsory education system, with six or five years primary education and three or four years lower secondary education, the format of 6-3 or 5-

4 depends on the situation of local school system. The starting school age is defined as six, postponed in some areas to seven.

The Teacher Law of the People's Republic of China was approved on 31 October 1993 and came into force on 1 January 1994. This law stipulates that the role, function and obligations of the teaching profession is to educate people, train builders and successors for the socialist cause, and enhance the quality of the nation with knowledge. The law for the first time introduced important measures to protect teachers' rights and improve professional qualifications. It also promoted the social status for teachers and called for respect from society by designating 10 September each year as National Teachers' Day.

The Private Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China was adopted on 28 December 2002, and came into force on 1 September 2003. The law stipulates the legal responsibility and environment for privately-run school establishments, strictly defining the definition and scope of private schools under its jurisdiction. It also clarifies that the administrative department for education under the State Council shall be in charge of the overall planning, comprehensive coordination, and macro-administration of the work relating to privately-run schools nationwide, while the administrative departments for education under the local people's governments at or above the county level shall be responsible for the work relating to privately-run schools in their own administrative regions. Private and international schools with curricula ranging from K-12 have been prompted and become significant since this law was adopted.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

Non-state schools basically did not exist until 1993, when the State Council (State Education Commission, currently called Ministry of Education after restructure of the State Council in 1998) issued the policy statement "Program for China's educational reform and development", which clarifies that the education reform process would focus on decentralization of administrative and financial authorities while the central government would have more responsibility for overseeing. The policy notes that the public schools will be in focus, while community-sponsored schools would be encouraged. Non-state schools operated by individuals and groups (along with overseas financial support) were also to be allowed but only in the context of existing government laws and regulations.

According to the *Education Law of People's Republic of China* (1995) and the *Regulations for Running a School by Social Forces* (1997), China treats education as a public good. However, in reality, it is rare to find any person or organization who

invests in education without expectation for future economic returns. In December of 2002, the National People's Congress passed the *Private Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China*. Responding to the reality of Chinese private education sector, the Promotion Law legitimizes economic returns to educational investment.

Article 2 of the Promotion Law gives the definition of non-state schools, taking into consideration their sponsors (non-governmental organizations), sources of funding, service targets, and other factors: activities conducted by public organizations or individuals, other than state organs, to establish and run schools and other institutions of education with non-governmental funds. According to the definition, the Promotion Law is not applicable to schools run by organizations of state power, administrative organs, military organs, schools run with government funds, and education training activities that enterprises and instructions carry out for their own employees.

The Promotion Law notes, "Non-government schools are public welfare undertakings". This makes it clear that non-state schools mentioned in the Promotion Law are different from for-profit enterprises, that their goal is not to maximize their profit, and that they should put public interest before everything else. However, at the same time, as measures for "supporting and rewarding" non-state schools, the Promotion Law stipulates, "After the cost of a private school is deducted, the funds for its development are withheld and the sum of money for other necessary expenses is retained in accordance with the relevant regulations of the state, the investor may obtain a reasonable amount of requital from the cash surplus of the school".

With the enactment of the *Law of Education Facilitated by Social Organizations* (LEFSO) in September 1st 2003, private organizations or individuals are allowed to operate for-profit educational institutions. Such institutions are allowed to make reasonable returns and distribute dividends, after deducting operational costs and reserving development funds.

Government tries to make distinctions and impose different tax policies for non-profit and for-profit non-state schools. From the taxation perspective, thirteen types of taxes related to educational institutions, only sales tax differentiates the educational institutions into clear categories of academic and non-academic, and other taxes are more general and vague, having no specific prescription for non-state education. Non-profit private institutions enjoy the same preferential tax policies as those enjoyed by public schools, whereas preferential tax policies applicable to for-profit schools are subject to the local tax bureau's authority.

Ownership of non-state schools is diverse because funding comes from different sources, which include corporations, public enterprises, and social organizations that

use public non-fiscal funds; individual citizens and corporations use private funds and corporations use their own funds to run affiliated schools. In terms of system of operation, non-state schools can be categorized into seven groups: (1) individual initiated and owned school (2) enterprise-owned school (3) public school with private management or with private support (4) non-state school created by public schools with affiliation relationship (5) converted school (former public school) (6) stakeholder-owned school (7) Chinese-foreign joint schools (Lin, X. & Yan, F., 2004). Therefore, ownership of non-state schools is another way to differentiate non-profit and for-profit institutions.

Once the government sets the distinction between for-profit and nonprofit schools, the nonprofit non-state schools should be treated equally as public schools. The nonprofit non-state schools exist because public education cannot provide enough educational services to meet the demand of families. Since the government currently focuses on compulsory education, the space for the development of for-profit schools is at the pre and post compulsory education level.

The Rules on Sino-foreign Co-operation in Running Schools, effective on September 1st 2003 state that Chinese and foreign education institutions are encouraged to co-operate and establish various forms of education institutions, except for those offering compulsory education or other specific education categories such as military, police, political and religious education.

Since Article 8 of China's Education Law stipulates that religion should be apart from education activities in China, any religious organizations or groups that want to start or operate a school in China must request a special permit from the State Council.

Homeschooling

The Compulsory Education Law states that the community, schools, and families shall safeguard the right to compulsory education of school-age children and adolescents, and, compulsory education is defined as attending a school, which is holding a schooling license granted by the government. Therefore, homeschooling is deemed to be illegal. The law does not apply to non-citizen children who hold foreign passports.

School choice not limited by family income

Increased school choice is a recent development of education reform in the People's Republic of China. The general policy, in urban areas, is that students go to the state school in their district of residence, (schools are assigned and divided by government into

districts or zones). There are three different way in which a student could be exempt from this policy: (1) Students are allowed to go to a state school in another district. The destination school is allowed to charge a relatively high “school option fee” on such students. (2) Students with a lower school entrance examination score, but who reach a certain threshold score line are allowed to enroll in a state school by paying extra admissions fee to the school. (3) Students are allowed to enroll in a non-state run school that usually charges a much higher school fee and tuition compared with the state schools (Tsang, M., 2003).

The traditional elitist education system is an historical question of school choice not limited by family income. The designation of “Key School” exists for selected schools at every educational level in China: elementary, secondary, and higher education. In addition, there are various levels of the “key” designation itself: There are national key institutions, provincial or municipal key institutions, and county or district key institutions. Key schools all enjoy priority funding as well as the privilege of recruiting the best students. At the elementary and secondary levels, this concept is similar to that of a “magnet” or “college preparatory” school in the United States (Surowski, D.B., 1996). Entry into such schools is based on examination and academic promise and achievement. For such schools, success is usually measured in terms of the percentage of its graduates entering the next level of the education. The key colleges and universities are these schools’ ultimate goals. The philosophy has been that through giving a limited number of schools, colleges, and universities priority in allocating limited resources, the training of the needed top-level manpower for China’s reconstruction can be carried out more efficiently.

Because the key schools are widely recognized for their higher quality teaching staff, effective principals, better facilities and more government investment, they attract students whose families take their children out of their districts of residency and choose a key school belonging to another district. Therefore, families who can afford the school choice fee will have better chance than those who cannot afford to send their children to a better school, which means the chance of entering public schools is not equal for everyone. Also, it makes the key schools become the biggest winners. Public resources are largely claimed by the key schools and the man-made unbalanced education is produced. As the school choice of most Chinese parents usually concentrates on public key schools, the expense will inevitably inflow into the key schools, which means the key schools snatch the public educational resources once again. Although the expense of choosing schools can make up for the lack of public educational funds, it deepens the gap between the key schools and other schools and makes Chinese education unbalanced.

As another major social issue and special case for school choice, Chinese migrant children’s schooling has been on the government’s agenda for some time. An estimated 98 million rural migrants work and live in Chinese cities, of whom 14 million are children. Under China’s current residency registration system, school budgets are usually based on

the number of students registered with the authorities as official residents in the school district. Unregistered students who go to local schools are often required to pay additional fees to compensate for unbudgeted government funding. However, migrant worker families, whose income is usually far more below that of average city residents, are often unable to afford the additional school fee (UNESCO, 2005). Many have little choice but to attend private-run migrant schools, where standards, facilities and education quality are less favorable than in public schools. Since both state and local governments have been paying more attention to the education issue of the migrant workers' children, increasing provisions for these children to study in public schools and enjoy the same education opportunities has developed in some cities: Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen have already cancelled all additional school fees for migrant children and require all migrant children to go to public schools. Based on the results and feedback of these experiment cities, the central government is expected to issue further policies to waive school choice fees nationwide.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

Distinctive character

Although Chinese compulsory education is guided by the State Council and principally managed by government at the county level and its implementation is carried out based on the overall planning of the provincial, autonomous regional, and municipal governments, curriculum design, development, implementation, and management are highly centralized through the National Center for School Curriculum and Textbook Development (NCCT). NCCT is an organization affiliated to the Ministry of Education, established in 1998 on the basis of the former Research Center for School Curriculum and Textbook Development, which carries major responsibilities for:

1. Conducting research on the evaluation of elementary, junior secondary and senior secondary education, and formulating standards for the assessment of learning results and reaching materials in elementary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education;
2. Formulating standards for the assessment of learning results and teaching materials in elementary, junior secondary and senior secondary education;
3. Assessing curricula, textbooks, educational materials, and audio and video products in elementary, junior secondary and senior secondary education;
4. Acting as the secretariat of the National Committee for the Examination and Approval of Textbooks used at elementary and middle schools;

5. Accreditation of schools for children of foreign nationals (UNESCO, 2011).

The curriculum of primary and junior secondary education is determined at national and provincial levels as prescribed by the State. Some schools with the necessary capacity also offer foreign language teaching. The local curriculum mainly aims at facilitating local economic and cultural development, and is arranged by the educational authorities of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. Schools are authorized to arrange the local curriculum, but the possibility for school distinctiveness is very limited and no clear policy and law has stipulated the distinctive characters of schools in the current Chinese education system.

However, school distinctiveness seems necessary and has huge potential to be developed, especially in certain areas of China. This will no doubt become evident as education reform continues. The population of the 55 ethnic minority groups is over 100 million, accounting for over 8% of the total population of China. The autonomous regions cover 64% of the national territory. To ensure the rights of ethnic minority groups to use and develop their own languages, the State has implemented bilingual education (using Mandarin and the local language of the ethnic minority) in primary and secondary schools. Trilingual schemes (Mandarin, ethnic minority language and foreign language) have also been tried. By the end of 2007, bilingual education in Mandarin and 21 ethnic minority languages was carried out in over 10,000 primary and secondary schools, with a total enrollment of over 6 million students (Ministry of Education, 2008). Ethnic schools in the autonomous regional with their own curriculum will be a great need and breakthrough regarding school distinctiveness.

Decisions about admitting pupils

According to the *Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China*, all children who have reached the age of six shall enroll in school to complete compulsory education. For children in those areas where the conditions are not satisfied, the entry age may be postponed to age seven. All children and adolescents who have Chinese nationality and have reached school age shall have equal right and obligation to receive compulsory education, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, family income, or religious belief. No tuition or miscellaneous fee may be charged in the implementation of compulsory education. However, although compulsory education is carried out by the people's government at the county level and in accordance with the overall planning of provincial, autonomous, regional, and municipal people's governments, in reality, when it comes to admitting pupils, implementation varies by area.

First, the residence registration system plays an important role in accepting pupils in primary schools. In some area, primary schools tend to admit pupils whose residence registrations belong to the school registration area or district, simply because the fiscal-educational funds are assigned by the numbers of local residence registration. It is the origin of students that usually go to schools near their homes. It is also why in some areas, “school option fees” are usually charged when pupils depart from their homes and choose schools outside their school registration areas. Furthermore, some schools, especially those “key public schools” with limited capacities, administer enrollment tests then pick students within their school registration areas to shrink the application numbers to meet their needs. Private schools also are widely seen to choose students according to their own criteria and charge additional fees all over the country.

Decisions about staff

There are two main categories of teachers in China, classified by the funding source and school structure. The first category is the state-paid teachers who work for public schools and are regarded as state employees. They usually earn a regular monthly salary comparable to other civil servants or workers in state-owned enterprises. The second category is Community-paid teachers who work for non-state schools and are paid by the local community or their employer schools. Their monthly income depends on the economic conditions of the school or the local community.

Both public schools and non-state schools are authorized to hire their teachers independently in accordance with the regulations of the central government. The hiring quotas of public schools are set by the State for schools of various kinds and at different levels. In terms of the selection methods and employment process, teachers and supporting staff are usually chosen by schools independently once they meet the post qualifications and stand out from comprehensive examinations.

The qualification system for teachers were specified in the *Chinese Teacher Qualification Regulations* in December 1995, stipulating the requirements for different kinds of teachers, the types, titles and the scope of application of teacher qualifications, the examinations for teacher qualifications, the confirmation of teacher qualification, and their legal liabilities. To acquire a teacher’s certificate, the following requirements must be met:

1. Citizenship: to be qualified as a Chinese teacher, the person must first be a Chinese citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, or occupation.

2. Ethical requirements: It is a basic requirement that teachers identify as socialists. A person must be ideologically and politically “sound” in the eyes of government to apply for a teacher’s certificate.
3. Academic requirements: Kindergarten and nursery teachers must graduate from infant normal schools for preschool education or above; Primary school teachers must graduate from secondary teacher schools or above; Junior secondary school teachers or teachers who teach general academic and specialized courses in primary vocation schools must graduate from two- or three-year specialized higher normal school or other colleges or above; Senior secondary teachers or teachers who teach general academic and specialized courses in senior vocational schools, technical schools, or vocational high schools must graduate from normal colleges or other universities and four- year colleges or above; higher education institution teachers must graduate from four-year colleges /universities or postgraduate institutions; Adult education teachers in accordance with the different levels and types of adult education involved must graduate from higher education institutions or secondary schools or above.
4. Educational and teaching skills: the person who can select correctly the educational or teaching content and method, design the teaching programs scientifically, and conduct educational and teaching activities effectively must have a good command of pedagogic and psychological laws; a reasonably good articulation and ability to handle the students; an ability to conduct scientific research; ability to improve the teaching content and method and raise the teaching standards; and a good physique needed for conducting teaching activities.

Teacher training is also another requirement for becoming a permanent teacher prior to employment. In order to become a primary school teacher, the person must obtain a specialized education in politics, general literacy and scientific knowledge, education theories, art, physical culture, and labor skills in a secondary normal school or other school above. Then the person needs to complete comprehensive job trainings, which include: an effort to inspire their dedication to primary school education; regulations and policies; instructions on related laws; developing familiarity with the teaching and general education theories; and mastering teaching methods for different courses. In order to become a secondary school teacher, the person must receive an education in politics, physical culture, basic theories of specialized courses, basic knowledge and skills, pedagogy, psychology, and develop basic knowledge and skills about methodologies of specific courses in a normal

university or other higher education institution or above.

The teacher training of primary and secondary school teachers is a shared responsibility of various educational administrative bureaus at different levels all over the country. They formulate training policies, provide financial support, define training programs and methods for management and examination, and publicize good practice experiences in a timely manner. Training institutions, usually schools at different levels are the major places for teachers to conduct training. Six main forms of in-service training for primary and secondary school teachers are widely conducted in training institutions:

1. systematically send teachers to teacher training schools for advanced studies or normal schools at different levels with the purpose of qualifying them for a certain academic status;
2. apply a training model which combines adult education with a national examination for self-taught students;
3. offer opportunities for junior secondary school teachers to take courses in two-year normal universities though self-study and acquire qualifications through a series of examinations;
4. encourage teachers to study while working. Encourage them to improve their competence in teaching close connect with their teaching practice, such as to be trained by the school itself, to learn through research and work, to require the senior teachers lead and help novices;
5. require the educational authorities to sponsor all kinds of training programs and gather teachers together for intense training;
6. require schools at various levels to be authorized to undertake teachers training, to offer training for primary and junior secondary school teachers when they are new on their jobs, need training for meet specific posted requirements, to become “backbones” of their schools, or need more education to meet the qualification for the next level academic title.

Accountability for school quality

In the current Chinese education accountability system, school quality can be

evaluated through the education inspection system, teacher qualifications, curriculum and textbooks and students' performance outcomes.

The main responsibilities of the departments of educational inspection at all levels are to monitor and examine the implementation of the state laws, regulations, principles and policies on the part of the government at the lower level, their departments of education and schools; assess and give guidance to educational work as administered by the governments at the lower level; give advice and report to governments and their education departments with regard to educational activities. The State Education Inspectorate is the agency for national educational inspection. It is composed of a chief inspector, a deputy chief inspector, and some other 60 inspectors selected from provinces and ministries level of the State Education Commission. Local governments at province level, autonomous regions, and municipalities have also established similar agencies under the lead of the central government.

Teacher qualifications are also an element of school quality. The Teachers Law stipulates the minimum degree requirements for teachers at each level of education. Therefore, the number and the percentage of teachers with the required degrees can roughly show the school's quality. In current Chinese education, teachers and educators are accountable for adherence to rules and accountable to the bureaucracy.

Curriculum is another significant factor in school quality. Traditional curriculum in China was characterized by heavy learning loads, which were the result of the discipline-based college-bound curriculum and examination-driven practices. It was often a major issue in policy debates during previous curriculum reforms. The most recent curriculum reform of basic education began with the National Congress of Education held by the central government in 1999. Since the decision to implement well-rounded quality education nation-wide, made by the central government at that congress, curriculum reform has been emerging as a centerpiece of basic education. This curriculum reform is moving toward the policy orientation of decentralization indicated by the style change of governance as well as the increased ratio of local and school curriculum. It is a breakthrough as it shifts to a learner-centered curriculum framework.

This new policy orientation has encouraged the local authorities to develop various innovative approaches for teacher development, and has resulted in a positive tendency in learning and teaching processes in schools of the pilot districts.

Even though Chinese education is still in the process of curriculum reform,

examination results are the driving force in terms of the quality of education. China uses national assessments to measure student and school progress and to make decisions about each, while schools use examinations to determine student access to the next level of education. In addition, examinations are used to monitor student learning, with the data providing the basis for changes within the system. For instance, in compulsory education, students are continuously assessed by teachers throughout the whole of their primary and secondary schooling. Students undergo tests to assess their ability in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects required by local educational bureaus. Teachers and school performance evaluations are primarily based on students' standard test scores and the number and the rate of students entering to the next level of education. Therefore, current school accountability is still based on a results driven system that contains educational examination, educational certification, academic degrees, professional qualification certificates, and educational supervision and assessment.

Teaching of values

The Article 24 of the Constitution stipulates that the State strengthens the building of socialist spiritual civilization by promoting education in high ideas, ethics, general knowledge, discipline and legality, and by promoting the formulation and observance of rules of conduct by various sectors of the population in urban and rural areas. The state advocates the civic virtues of love for the motherland, for the people, for labor, for science and for socialism. It conducts education in patriotism and collectivism, in internationalism and communism and in dialectical and historical materialism, to combat capitalist, feudalist and other decadent ideas.

According to the Education Law of 1995, education in the People's Republic of China shall serve the construction of socialist modernization, be combined with production and labor, and satisfy the needs of training constructors and successors with all round development of morality, intelligence and physique for the socialist cause. The State shall conduct education for promoting among learners patriotism, collectivism and socialism as well as ideals, ethics, discipline, legality, national defense, and ethnic unity. Education shall be carried out in the spirit of inheriting and expanding the fine historical and cultural traditions of the Chinese nation and assimilating all the fine achievements of the civilization progress of human beings.

As it is spelled out in Article 3 of the national education law, classes in Marxist philosophy are compulsory in Chinese schools. From kindergarten to high school, students are required to take two classes a week in ideological education. In college they must take two more courses. The article states "In developing socialist educational undertakings the

state shall uphold Marxism-Leninist, Mao Zedong thought and the theories of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics as directions and with the basic principles of the Constitution.” The ideology classes have been taught as “political education” since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and include the history of the Communist Party, and its victories over cruel landlords, Imperial powers, and Chang Kai-shek. Atheism has also traditionally been part of the curriculum.

Nowadays, ethical and moral problems are commonly discussed. As Chinese society undergoes intense economic development, the topics of ideology classes have shifted from social class struggles to nationalistic themes and ethical behavior—this in an attempt to emphasize the moral aspects of schooling.

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